

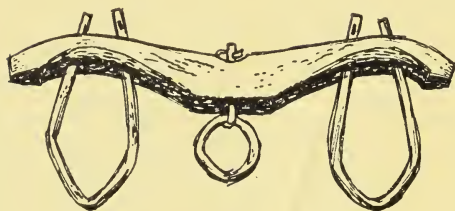
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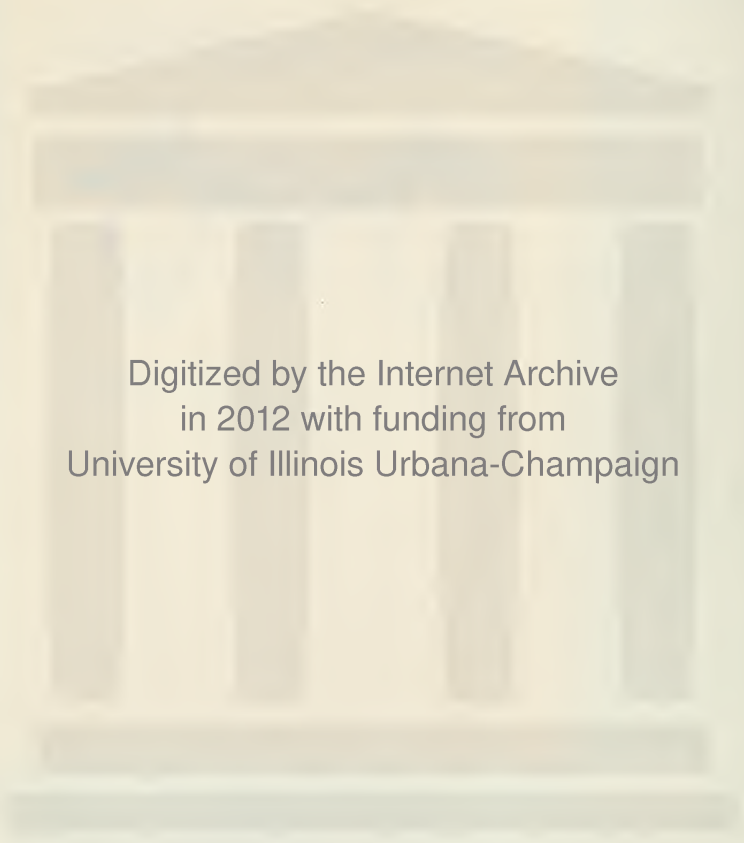


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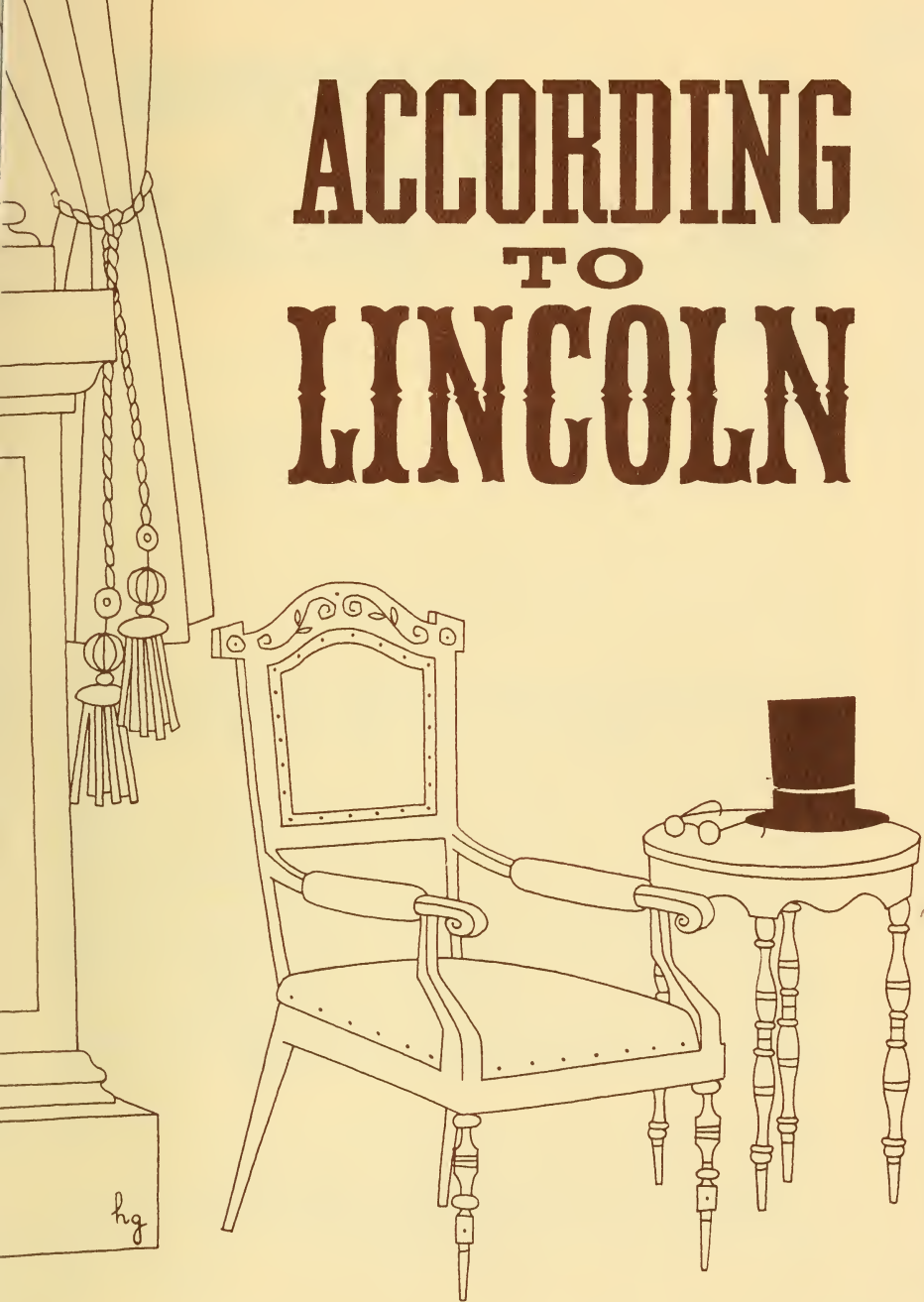
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ACCORDING TO LINCOLN





ACCORDING TO LINCOLN

by RICHARD CHRISTNER

Illustrated by
Harry Goff

FOREWORD

Nobody ever liked a good story better than Abraham Lincoln, especially when it proved an important point. One of his friends once wrote that when the President laughed at a story, he "laughed all over."

Lincoln's humor, which reveals courage during a time of great national peril, is an important part of our tradition. So are his earthy common sense and deep, human understanding. He was completely untouched by the pomp and circumstance of high office.

Many of Lincoln's stories are as worthwhile today as when they were first told. Here are some of these stories, with the President's words as they were reported by his friends.

Here, too, is a selection of some of the important things Lincoln said in speeches, as well as a famous Lincoln letter.

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THE ANGRY GOVERNOR

During the Civil War, the Governor of one of the Northern states arrived in Washington in a violent rage. He was angry about the number of troops drafted from his state, the way they were being drafted, and the draft in general. He went first to see the Provost Marshal-General, who couldn't give him an answer to satisfy him. Neither could the Secretary of War. So he stalked out and took his case straight to the President. Before the Provost Marshal-General had a chance to see Lincoln, the Governor returned to his office. He had been with Lincoln three hours. He was smiling and contented. He didn't mention his interview. He merely said that he was going home and had dropped in en route to say goodbye.

The next time the Provost Marshal-General saw Lincoln, he asked what had happened with the Governor. He said he supposed Lincoln had been forced to make a lot of concessions to get the Governor into such a good humor.

"Oh, no," Lincoln replied. "I did not concede anything. You know how that Illinois farmer managed the big log that lay in the middle of the field. To the inquiries of his neighbors one Sunday, he announced that he got rid of the big log.

"'Got rid of it!' said they. 'How did you do it? It was too big to haul out, too knotty to split, and too wet and soggy to burn; what did you do?'

"'Well, now, boys,' replied the farmer, 'if you won't divulge the secret, I'll tell you how I got rid of it—I ploughed around it.'

"Now," said Lincoln, "don't tell anybody, but that's the way I got rid of the Governor. I ploughed around him, but it took me three mortal hours to do it, and I was afraid every minute he'd see what I was at."

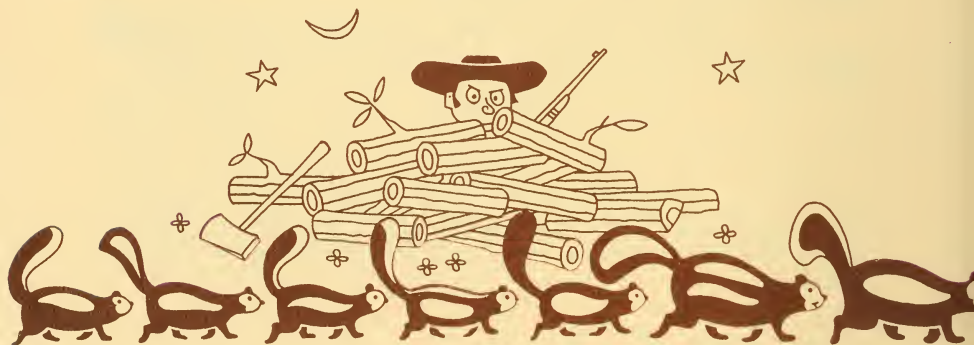
THE SENATE COMMITTEE

During his term of office Lincoln frequently had to listen at length to suggestions from people who thought they knew how to run the government and fight the war better than he did. Once, after his Secretary of War had resigned, he was visited by a committee from the Senate. They pointed out that no member of the cabinet had been chosen for his ability to prosecute a war and the cabinet as a whole had lost the confidence of the country. Since the President was about to select a new Secretary of War, they said, it might be a good idea to change all seven cabinet members.

"Gentlemen," Lincoln replied, "your request for a change of the whole cabinet because I have made one change reminds me of a story I once heard in Illinois of a farmer who was much troubled by skunks. They annoyed his household at night, and his wife insisted that he should take measures to get rid of them. One moonlight night he loaded his old shotgun and stationed himself in the yard to watch for the intruders, his wife remaining in the house anxiously awaiting the result.

"After some time she heard the shotgun go off, and in a few minutes the farmer entered the house. 'What luck had you?' said she. 'I hid myself behind the wood pile with the shotgun pointed toward the hen roost, and before long there appeared not one skunk but seven. I took aim, blazed away, killed one, and he raised such a fearful smell that I concluded it was best to let the other six go'."

The Senate committee broke into laughter and departed.





VANITY

Once Lincoln and a friend were in a conversation where the name of a certain Illinois politician came up. The politician, who had recently died, had been an able man, but extremely vain.

"If General ——— had known how big a funeral he would have had," Lincoln said, "he would have died years ago."

THE GOVERNOR WHO WANTED HIS OWN WAY

A Northern Governor who worked hard at raising and equipping troops from his state during the war often complained violently when he was asked by the federal government to carry out particular orders. On one occasion he argued and protested so bitterly about not having his own way that the Secretary of War wondered whether he could be depended upon to cooperate. The Governor's threatening dispatches were shown to Lincoln for his opinion.

The dispatches seemed to amuse the President. After reading them over he said cheerfully, "Never mind, never mind, those dispatches don't mean anything. Just go right ahead. The Governor is like a boy I saw once at a launching. When everything was ready they picked out a boy and sent him under the ship to knock away the trigger and let her go. At the critical moment everything depended on the boy. He had to do the job well by a direct vigorous blow, and then lie flat and keep still while the ship slid over him.

"The boy did everything right, but he yelled as if he was being murdered from the time he got under the keel until he got out. I thought the hide was all scraped off his back; he wasn't hurt at all. The master of the yard told me that this boy was always chosen for that job, that he did his work well, that he never had been hurt, but that he always squealed in that way.

"That's just the way with the Governor. Make up your minds that he is not hurt, and that he is doing the work right, and pay no attention to his squealing. He only wants to make you understand how hard his task is, and that he is on hand performing it."



THE SPIRIT OF MORTAL

On one occasion Lincoln was visited by a member of Congress from Ohio who sank into a chair and announced in a drunken voice, "Oh, why should (hic) the spirit of mortal be proud?"

This was a line of Lincoln's favorite poem, which goes:

"Oh! Why should the spirit of mortal be proud?—
Like a swift-fleeting meteor, a fast-flying cloud,
A flash of the lightning, a break of the wave,
He passeth from life to his rest in the grave."

"My dear sir," said Lincoln, examining the Congressman closely, "I see no reason whatever."

THE OFFICE SEEKERS

During his Presidency, Lincoln was constantly plagued by office seekers. Once a friend, seeing him looking anxious, asked him if there was bad news from the front. "No," answered the President, "it isn't the war, it's that postmastership in Brownsville, Ohio."

On one occasion some men came to talk to him about giving a command to General Fremont. Lincoln said he didn't know where he could place him. It reminded him, he said, of the man who advised his son to take a wife. Agreeing, the son asked, "Whose wife shall I take?"

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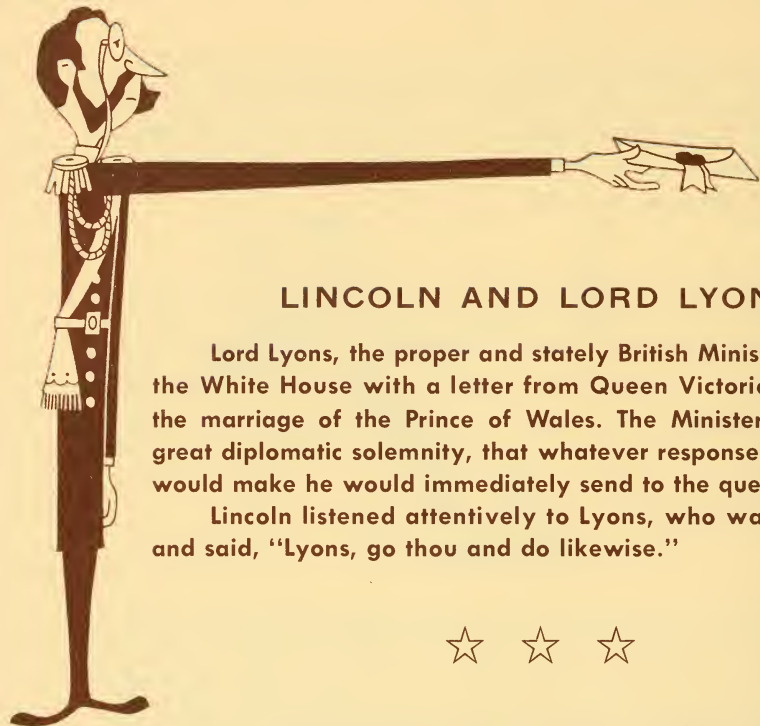
On another occasion a delegation called on President Lincoln to ask for the appointment of a friend to the Sandwich Islands (now Hawaii). After talking about how capable their candidate was, they went on to point out that he was also ill and that the climate would be good for him. "Gentlemen," Lincoln said, "I am sorry that there are eight other applicants for that place, and they are all sicker than your man."

SIDE ISSUE

A farmer from one of the border counties of Virginia came to Lincoln at a reception and said that some Union soldiers had helped themselves to some hay and horses on his farm. He said he hoped Lincoln would help make sure he got paid as soon as possible.

Lincoln said this reminded him of an old acquaintance of his, Jack Chase. Chase, who was the best raftsman Lincoln had ever seen, was eventually named Captain of the first steamboat on the river where he had handled rafts. Jack always used to take the wheel going through the rapids. One day when the boat was churning along through the roughest part of the rapids and Jack was doing his best to stay in the narrow channel a small boy came up and tugged on his coat tail. "Say, Mister Captain!" he said. "I wish you would just stop your boat a minute—I've lost my apple overboard!"





LINCOLN AND LORD LYONS

Lord Lyons, the proper and stately British Minister, arrived at the White House with a letter from Queen Victoria announcing the marriage of the Prince of Wales. The Minister stated, with great diplomatic solemnity, that whatever response the President would make he would immediately send to the queen.

Lincoln listened attentively to Lyons, who was a bachelor, and said, "Lyons, go thou and do likewise."



EXCERPTS FROM FAMOUS LINCOLN SPEECHES

FIRST INAUGURAL ADDRESS: I am loth to close. We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection.

The mystic cord of memory, stretching from every battle-field and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.

SECOND INAUGURAL ADDRESS: With malice towards none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphans, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.

MESSAGE TO CONGRESS (1861): Again as has already been said, there is not, of necessity, any such thing as the free hired laborer being fixed to that condition for life. Many independent men everywhere in these States, a few years back in their lives, were hired laborers. The prudent penniless beginner in the world labors for wages a while, saves a surplus with which to buy tools or land for himself, then labors on his own account another while, and at length hires another new beginner to help him. This is the just and generous and prosperous system which opens the way to all—gives hope to all, and consequent energy and progress, and improvement of condition to all. No men living are more worthy to be trusted than those who toil up from poverty—none less inclined to touch or take aught which they have not honestly earned. Let them beware of surrendering a political power they already possess, and which, if surrendered, will surely be used to close the door of advancement against such as they, and to fix new disabilities and burdens upon them, till all of liberty shall be lost.



ADDRESS TO A COMMITTEE FROM THE WORKINGMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF NEW YORK (1864): Property is the fruit of labor; property is desirable; is a positive good in the world. That some should be rich shows that others may become rich, and hence, is just encouragement to industry and enterprise. Let not him who is houseless pull down the house of another, but let him labor diligently and build one for himself, thus by example assuring that his own shall be safe from violence when built.

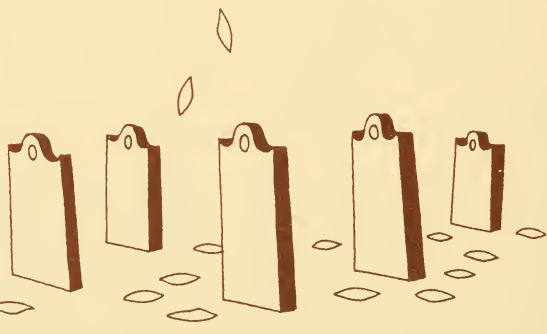


LINCOLN'S LETTER TO MRS. BIXBY

Dear Madam:

I have been shown in the files of the War Department a statement of the Adjutant General of Massachusetts that you are the mother of five sons who have died gloriously on the field of battle. I feel how weak and fruitless must be any word of mine which would attempt to beguile you from the grief of a loss so overwhelming. But I cannot refrain from tendering to you the consolation that may be found in the thanks of the republic they died to save. I pray that our heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement, and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom.

Yours very sincerely and respectfully,
Abraham Lincoln





THE GETTYSBURG ADDRESS

Four score and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth upon this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived, and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of it, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that the nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But in a larger sense we can not dedicate—we can not consecrate—we can not hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us, the living, rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they have, thus far, so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they here gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation under God shall have a new birth of freedom; and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

The quotes from Lincoln in this booklet appeared in "The Life, Public Services and State Papers of Abraham Lincoln" by Henry J. Raymond (1865) and "Reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln by Distinguished Men of His Time" collected and edited by Allen Thorndike Rice (1886). Good one volume biographies of Lincoln for those interested in reading further are those by Benjamin P. Thomas and Carl Sandburg.







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